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Joe 4-01.1 Ramparts
Org. 1 Center for Democratic
Institutions

Rep. Scheer, Robert.
Pers. Cohelan, Joe
Org. 1 Ad Hoc University
Committee for Statement
on Vietnam

IT SEEMS TO ME

By Charles A. Sprague

Last March this writer was driving around in Berkeley, Calif., just south of the campus. It's an older part of the residential district, with many rooming houses and such. I noticed quite a few windows held a placard "Scheer for Congress." This was in the area where many of the Berkeley rebels live, and indicated their backing of Scheer. Previously I had read Scheer's report, "How the United States Got Involved in Viet Nam," which was published by the Center for Democratic Institutions at Santa Barbara, with its usual disclaimer of responsibility for facts and opinions expressed. Scheer was a severe critic of the role the U.S. assumed in Viet Nam. Later this material was used in an article in Ramparts Magazine, a journal of dissent of which Scheer is an editor. This attracted national attention because of its references to Michigan State University's connection with CIA in Viet Nam.

How did the primary election come out? The incumbent, Rep Joe Cohelan, was renominated but, as Scheer said: "The most incredible thing that happened in the last five months was that we got 45 per cent of the vote against an incumbent who was considered safe." The SF Chronicle, in reporting this, said that after his press conference Scheer "and some followers set out to picket the Oakland Board of Education ('because', he said, 'it needs picketing.')

His picture shows him heavily bearded, bespectacled, quite in the mode of the country's New Left. Scheer campaigned of course in strong opposition to Johnson's policy in Viet Nam.

What an ideological gulf separates Northern California, particularly the Bay area, and Southern California, extremes of Left and Right. In the former the Berkeley rebels with enough votes nearly to upset a prominent political liberal, an economist who had been an official in the milk drivers' union, a former member of the Berkeley Welfare Commission and of the city council. In the latter, in Orange County particularly and San Diego, cells of the John Birch Society, the stronghold of the ultra right which finances anti-communist crusades. It represents in part the cleavage between the intellectuals and pseudo-intellectuals and those who "have it made" and live in retirement in comfort and in fear.

The attitude of many of the intelligentsia toward the administration war policy was revealed in a three-page advertisement in the New York Times for June 5th. Two groups sponsored the advertisement: Ad Hoc Universities Committee for the Statement on Viet Nam, and Committee of the Professions. The signers called on the government to stop all bombing in Viet Nam, negotiate with the National Liberation Front, encourage and not interfere with exercise of popular sovereignty in Viet Nam and "to evaluate seriously whether self-determination for the Vietnamese as well as our own national interests would not be best served by termination of our military presence in Viet Nam." Names of signers, set in agate type must have run to over 4,000.

One cannot say that this statement was unpatriotic or radical in its demand for disengagement. The prime fault is that it seems unrealistic

short of evacuation of Viet Nam, which would in no way insure the free exercise of popular sovereignty there, or self-determination for the South Vietnamese.

This advertisement and the Scheer vote in the Berkeley district affect internal politics more than external policy. They disclose again the disaffection of the New Left and many of the intelligentsia in universities and the professions with the Johnson administration. As for the latter group much of this is distaste for Johnson's "style," which contrasts so sharply with the grace and urbanity and poise of John F. Kennedy. How much this will affect the election this year is a question which puzzles political managers. It is conceded there will be Republican gains in the congressional elections. That would be expected following the GOP disaster in 1964. Since Republicans in Congress have been more hawks than doves (more doves among the Democrats), the vote for Republicans would reflect dissatisfaction with Johnson but give no assurance of any change of congressional policy on the Viet Nam war.

What we have now is a breakdown of the consensus on which President Johnson sets so much store. The President doesn't have the support he needs, especially in the Senate, what with the defection of Sen. Fulbright, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, and the tirades of Sen. Morse in opposition. As for the American people they get impatient for victory, especially when now we are fighting against what rates as a very feeble foe. Results in the November election will reflect the popular mood in October, and that will be affected by what develops or fails to develop in the intervening months. In a way the 1966 congressional campaign will be fought by soldiers in Viet Nam rather than by candidates in the U.S.A.